

June 16, 2019

REDEFINING HOPE, REDEMPTION &
THE AMERICAN DREAM

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I am more than the sum of my faults, is a basic concept that allows us to see the good in ourselves. Many of us have guilt over our past, but what is guilt good for if we don't use it to motivate us to be better? It took many years of introspection and stripping away my old thinking patterns to become the person I am today and it often feels as if I am invisible to the world. I long to be seen, not for my bad choices, but for the new man I am today. The world I live in has never met this new me and that makes me sad, because in a way I haven't met the world. I grew up with jaded eyes in a crime filled household, but today I see with new eyes, and this is important because the lenses we use to look out at the world, also affect how we look within and view ourselves. Years back I used to lay awake at night and question, was I born into this world just to commit a crime and die in jail? As a human who recognizes the miracle of life I have to believe that my life is worth more than to pass through this world like a ghost, I have to be worth more than my one shot at existence on this planet being defined by one crime that happened in seconds... I have to matter more than that...or perhaps that's just my human ego who tells my soul that? This is the dilemma of being sentenced to die in jail as a young person...My Heart still beats...I have value...Don't you see me world???, Is a question we ask ourselves in the dark.

How does one find inspiration in the face of death by incarceration? When faced with this reality we respond in many different ways, but a lot of it depends on the opportunities available to us. Coming to prison with a sentence of 174 years plus 6 lifetimes makes you feel as if you are drowning, you feel as if your soul is dying and you don't know how your body continues to breathe and as with all drowning people, you reach for anything that floats to survive. And unfortunately the nearest things to latch onto are not conducive for success. Drugs, gangs, illegal activity are the easiest things to sign up for, and for a kid who already has issues loving himself it's a recipe for disaster. It can take years to muster up the courage to break ties with the gang, you fear for your safety and even the looks you will receive once you break away. However there are few who break away from the gang fairly fast and those men should be applauded because this is no small feat. Procedure is to not even allow you to segregate yourself from the gangs until your life is under direct credible threat. Once one breaks free of the gangs in the prison system you go through a new process of self discovery. Now, who will you become without the strict guidelines of the prison gangs and politics to follow? You are free to be a saint or a dirtbag, the choice is all yours. I was one of those late bloomers to drop out of the gang and still broke the rules and got involved in the wrong things. I had to really deconstruct my thought process and figure out why I was making these bad choices. I realized that I was choosing immediate gratification over success affirming goals. In cognitive behavioral therapy, I learned that thoughts become feelings and feelings become actions. I had to change my distorted thinking habits and negative self talk, like "It's always gonna be bad," "things will always go wrong for me." I had to replace that method of thinking with positive self talk, and if I haven't met a goal, that just means I need a new approach or to have a little faith, not give up on myself and stay the course.

The Anti Recidivism Coalition,

A.R.C, has been an integral part of my growth and break throughs I've had as a person. Jacob Brevard and David Garnica helped me to realize that, "If I want someone to fight for me, then I have to be someone worth fighting for." This is my motto that I live by. Life will always be full of hurdles and how you deal with them is everything. Who and what we turn to in times of strife is a real determining factor of who we are as men or women.

Hope is what drives me today, but it wasn't easy. How does one find Hope when the court sentences you to die in jail? My Judge Ronald Taylor is retired now, but he was a good man and was doing his job. At my sentencing Hope was treated like dinner plates at a greek wedding. When you find yourself in a Hopeless situation, Hope must be re-defined. We have to rediscover our awe of life. My Hope today is anchored in appreciation for all the small beauties in life, like hearing my dad and moms voice or seeing the moon light up the night sky while walking the track. I have to ask myself what is my existence without Freedom? Does it take Freedom to validate my existence? Can one exist without the other?...I found Hope unexpectedly and in an unconventional way. I was sponsored by an app called STRE.AM , by Sam Boyd and others in the app and I started to receive positive feedback from all over the world giving me credit for my positive attributes and this shattered the distorted view I had of my self and society. Most of my life I have been told by police and corrections officers and D.A's that I was worthless. I thought society hated me, but now I realize society is a reflection of me. After getting so many positive vibes from all over the world, I fell back in love with humanity, it changed my life and Hope was born again within me. Another driving force in my life is societies evolving view and treatment of people like me. People are getting out now, when for decades men were sent here to be forgotten and die alone in their cells. The men of A.R.C. are Hope in the flesh and they walk among us as visual reminders of human potential and that Redemption is real. My name is Jessie Milo CDCR# P-40495, and Yes my sentence is 174 years plus 6 lifes, and the person I am today can overcome that mountain, but only with the acceptance of courageous leaders in our society. Leaders who are tired of burrying us alive under hundreds of years of sentences. Hope and Redemption are a cornerstone of my existence and I think it is pretty cool that Redemption is possible during this life and not just in death. As a child I grew up in poverty, I'm also the child of a king, and if I can go from being burried alive to earning my freedom, then that is My American Dream.

To : **APWA**

You have my permission to reprint and post my story. Please keep my real full name and CDCR attached to it and adress.

Name: Jessie Milo

CDCR# P-40495

Conviction: 3 counts Attempted Murder/Gang/Gun/Prior enhancements

SENTENCE: 174 years plus 6 life sentences

Number of Years Incarcerated: 17 (Seventeen Years)

Institution: CSP-CORCORAN

Jessie Milo #P-40495 (3A05-147)

PoBox 3461

Corcoran CA 93212

Age At Time of Crime: 22

Exempt from Youth/elderly relief due to burglary strike prior, committed at age 18

No prior/post history of violence/drugs/weapons/ I'm also a gang drop out